A Contrastive Study of Euphemism and Dysphemism in Arabic and English Mass Media Concerning COVID–19 Pandemic

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الملخص:

يستهدف هذا البحث دراسة **استراتيجيات التلطيف وسوء التعبيراللغوي دراسة تقابيلة** للخطاب الإعلامي باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية في خضم انتشار وباء كورونا المستجد (كوفيد ١٩) الذي احتل الحديث عنه جميع وسائل الإعلام المقرؤه منها والمسموعة منذ اللحظة التي أعلنت فيها منظمة الصحة العالمية فيروس كورونا وباءاً عالمياً. ولتحديد أكثر استراتيجيات التلطيف وسوء التعبير شيوعا وأكثرها إستخداما في التغطية الإعلامية حول المستجددات المتعلقة بفيروس كورونا خلال الموجة الأولى من الجائحة، تم جمع عدد أربعين مادة إعلامية من مصادر مختلفة تتضمن أشهر الصحف والقنوات الإخبارية باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية، وتحليلها تحليلا نوعياً وكمياً في ضوء نظريات التلطيف و سوء التعبير. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أنه أثناء الموجة الأولى لجائحة كورونا كانت تميل وسائل الإعلام العربية إلى استخدام عبارات و كلمات ملطفة للحديث عن فيروس كورونا فيما فضلت وسائل الإعلام الإنجليزية استخدام عبارات أكثر حدة لوصف حالة الفوضى و الخطر التي تسبب بها الفيروس. و بوجه عام، نجد أن العينات المختارة تشير إلى أن أساليب سوء التعبير كانت السمة الأبرز في محتوى كل وسائل الإعلام في تقديمها لجائحة كورونا المستجد ليأتي على أثرها انتشار حالة الذعر والهلع لدى المواطنين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *التلطيف – سوء التعبير–كوفيد ١٩ – وسائل الإعلام.*

Abstract:

COVID-19 ﴾Coronavirus﴿ was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020. As the world comes to grips with the new Coronavirus that has swept into our towns, cities and communities, society faces the challenge of figuring out how to talk about the impact the virus is having on our everyday lives. Using a descriptive qualitative analysis, this contrastive study is geared mainly towards probing into euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies used frequently in media coverage during the first wave of COVID-19. Data consisting of 40 pieces of press material are collected from different Arabic and English media outlets, namely: *Youm 7*, *Al Arabiya*, *The Guardian*, and *CNN*. The data are analyzed in the light of Allan and Burridge's ﴾1991﴿ theory of euphemism and dysphemism, Warren's model of euphemism ﴾1992﴿ and Lakoff and Johnson's ﴾1980﴿ conceptual metaphor theory. The findings of the study show that during the first wave of the pandemic mass media tends to use dysphemism more than euphemism. In Arabic mass media, euphemistic strategies are used more frequently than in English media. The most common euphemistic strategy used in Arabic media discourse is "jargon", whereas in English media discourse the most common euphemistic strategy is "understatement". Unlike Arabic, English media used dysphemistic strategy more frequently than euphemistic

strategy. "Metaphor" is the most frequent dysphemistic strategy in English media discourse, whereas "personification" is the most frequent strategy in Arabic media discourse.

Keywords: *euphemism, dysphemism, COVID-19 (Coronavirus), mass media*

1. Introduction

Viruses are not a novel threat to humanity. Within the last century, the world has witnessed a wave of severe infectious diseases outbreak such as Spanish Flu (1918), AIDS (1981), H1N1 Swine Flu (2009), West African Ebola (2014), Zika Virus (2015), yet it is COVID-19 that has changed modern policies, economies, societies and seems to be changing cultures (Bhadoria1et al., 2021). The extraordinary health emergency has entailed a number of linguistic challenges. It does not only result in using medical terms and producing novel vocabulary and expressions in our everyday conversation but also shows how we resort to the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms when it comes to diseases, illnesses, and deaths as they are directly linked to the taboo language. Accordingly, Euphemism plays a role in sugarcoating such "taboos" through using circumlocutions, metonymy, metaphors, or other strategies of euphemism that lead to avoiding referring directly to "taboos".

Throughout this unpredictable health crisis, mass media outlets have played a worldwide role in the community. As a bridge between government and society, media outlets, including newspapers, television, radio, and the internet have unprecedented influence as instruments of communication. With multiple stories, persistent headlines, and continuous updates, they have become the main source of information about the novel Coronavirus. As much as the media keep the public updated on the pandemic, the language used also contributes to the spread of fear and panic among the public, as many news headlines depict COVID-19 as a deadly disease and emphasize its catastrophic impact on the world economy and human health. Besides, there is a widespread use of militaristic metaphors in media during the time of the pandemic. COVID-19 is described in terms of these metaphors as soldiers bravely fighting against a deadly virus with every weapon they have, creating an atmosphere of war (Georgiou, 2021). Thus, using euphemism and dysphemism in media coverage of Coronavirus can play a role in containing COVID-19 and, potentially, saving lives or creating and spreading fear and panic about the COVID-19 outbreak as media influences the perception of the public.

2. Literature Review

As COVID-19 disease has become a dominating global discourse, numerous studies have been conducted in many fields, including linguistics, in a short period of time to demonstrate how people use language in tough times. In 2020, Tan et al. investigated COVID -19 articles from different perspectives to help readers to understand human language at the personal and governmental level, and guides writers, researchers, and authorities in specific fields. Katermina and Yachenko (2020) examined the axiology (study of value) of COVID-19 in English mass media discourse to determine how mass media affect the individual's interpretation of the world by analyzing how COVID-19 Pandemic is verbalized in mass media text.

Moreover, Olimat conducted two different studies in the same year. The first study was in August 2020 to investigate the use of euphemism and dysphemism by Jordanians for dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic from a sociolinguistic perspective. In September 2020, he conducted another study to examine dysphemistic expressions that were used by the former president of the United States, Donald Trump, in his speech about COVID-19. In March 2021, Kafi and Degaf carried out a study to explain the types and functions of euphemistic and dysphemistic expressions used by Donald Trump in his speech at the State of the

Union Address (SOTU) 2022. In May 2021, Ibrahim A. conducted a semantic and ontological analysis of metaphors used by world leaders during the Corona virus outbreak. More recently, Mu et al analyzed thirty-five reports about China on COVID –19 Pandemic in New York Times to uncover the media ideology behind the reports and the image of China that media outlets construct.

3. Research Problem and Objectives

Language can shape the way we perceive the world. It is usually the mirror that reflects the events that face human beings and how they deal with them. According to popular databases, such as Elsevier coronavirus center, Scopus, and Clarivate, the vast majority of researchers have studied Covid–19 from a scientific or medical perspective, focusing on public health guidance, symptoms, infections, treatments, vaccines, and drug discovery. To date, no study has examined the use of figurative language in media coverage of covid 19 as a way of influencing public opinion. A better understanding of how language contributes to crisis containment can be gained by studying how euphemistic and dysphemistic terms are used in light of the challenging situation of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The present study aims to investigate the use of euphemism and dysphemism in both Arabic and English mass media during the critical period of the pandemic. Furthermore, the study is not only cognitively beneficial to academics in the field of language and linguistics, but also to broader non-academic community such as media practitioners who play a crucial role in framing the picture of the world, medical professionals who sometimes need to use euphemism to communicate with their patients in order to reduce the level of patients' stress and improve their chances of recovery, as well as politicians who are often in the spotlight of the public and journalists for their political activities and discourses. Thus, the process of choosing the suitable words to their audiences cannot be successfully achieved without being aware of euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies in order to avoid the loss face and to keep the relationship between reader and writer or speaker and listener in good harmony.

4. Theoretical Framework

The present study is built on the theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism by Allan and Burridge (1991; 2006), since it provides a clear and systematic explanation for the types of euphemism and dysphemism, combined with Warren's theory of euphemism (1992) as

well as Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980).

Euphemism is a linguistic device existing in human society. It plays a crucial role in facilitating social interaction. It's used to show politeness, ease communication, and coordinate personal relationships. It is basically used to avoid a "taboo" and express "politeness" (Huang, 2005). Without euphemism, any language would seem to be vulgar, rude, and void of politeness to some degree. Dealing with sensitive issues that may cause a feeling of pain for others requires choosing words and expressions that avoid naming things directly or sugar-coat ideas. This is the purpose of euphemism (Al-Hamad and Al-Shunnaq, 2011). Enright stated, "A language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication" (Enright, 1985, p.29).

Euphemism is defined by many different linguists and in many ways. Leech (1974, p. 53) defines euphemism as a "practice of referring to something offensive or indelicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant or more acceptable than it really is". Rawson (1981, p.1) categorize euphemisms as mild, agreeable, or roundabout words used in place of painful, or offensive ones. Willis and Klammer (1981, p.192) identify euphemism as "a mild or roundabout word or expression

used instead of a more direct word or expression to make one's language delicate and inoffensive even to a squeamish person." Allan & Burridge (1991, p.11) state that "euphemisms are used as alternatives to dispreferred expressions and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own face or, that of the audience, or of some third face".

The equivalent meaning of 'euphemism' in Arabic is given by the description "التلطيف اللغوي" or "التحسين اللفظي". Earlier Arab language scholars, such as Al–Farra' (1970), pointed out that the Holy Quran contained euphemism. The verses chosen are discussing sensitive issues such as sex, prostitution, and old age. They concluded that making direct references to socially unacceptable topics is not preferred. Al–Tarabulsi (1981), a modern Arab linguist, considers euphemism as a softening process, "the substitution of an unpleasant expression with a more acceptable one" (Abdel Wahab, 2019). Although these definitions may seem to be worded differently, they all have something in common; that is, a euphemism is an expression designed to beautify an unpleasant topic, word, or thing so that it sounds less offensive or less unpleasant.

There are various ways to form euphemisms in English. Two of the central and most comprehensive classifications of euphemism strategies are Allan and Burridge

(1991) classification and Warren's Model (1992). Indeed, both classifications are used in most studies probing into euphemism strategies. It is noteworthy that both models have some overlaps as would be shown later in this section.

Allan and Burridge (1991: 14) define seventeen strategies in the formation of euphemism and dysphemism, they are:

1) **Figurative expressions**: using figures of speech such as simile, irony, personification, etc. like "*go to the happy hunting ground*" to reveal "die".

2) **Metaphor**: metaphor is defined as a creation of a concept, usually euphemistic, standing for tabooed issues through comparison (Neaman & Silver, 1983). An example of metaphor is "*the cavalry's come*" for "I've got my period" [in reference to the red coats of the British cavalry army] (Allan & Burridge, 1991:15).

3) **Flippancies** :flippancy has a meaning beyond the existing statement i.e., being less serious in an attempt to sound funny, like: "*kicked the bucket*" and "*get your finger out*" for die (Allan & Burridge, 1991:15)

4) **Remodeling**: remodeling is like one-for-one substitutions in which either the onset or rhyme

of the tabooed term is retained but complemented by the rest of some semantically unrelated word like 'sugar' or 'shoot' for 'shit', 'tarnation' for 'damnation' (Jdetawy, 2019). 'Remodeling" is referred to as "**phonemic replacement**" in Warren's Model (1992) and as "euphemistic mispronunciation" (Rawson, 1981).

5) **Circumlocutions**: circumlocution is the roundabout saying of embarrassing ideas by using more words than needed so, it is the use of more words that are necessary to express an idea (Jdetawy, 2019). Expressions about the toilet in English are formed with phrases such as '*to wash one's hand*', and '*to powder one's nose'*. Further examples include the English expression '*in the family way'* to signify pregnancy.

6) **Clippings**: Clipping is cutting, making short or simple, i.e., removing a piece of the word as in "*Jeez*" for "Jesus" (Allan & Burridge, 1991:16).

7) **Acronyms**: An acronym is a type of euphemism that combines several words into one word. Example: "SNAFU" which is an acronym of the

"Situation Normal, All Fucked Up" indicates the possibility of a disaster event.

8) **Abbreviations** :Abbreviation is the type of euphemism that stands for words to be some letters. Example: "Bowel Movement" to "*B.M*" which means to defecate.

9) **Omissions**: this is a strategy used for euphemizing in English whereby words thought to be rude are omitted. This can be by means of (1) quasi– omission suspension dots (…), dashes (– –), asterisks (***) and in articulated sounds, e.g., mm, er, etc.; and (2) full omissions, such as: "F" instead of writing or saying "Fuck".

10) **One–for–one substitutions**: One for one substitution is one word that has a similarity of meaning, but more subtle can replace one more coarse word. Like "*casket*" for "coffin" or "*bottom*" for "ass".

11) **General–for–Specific** :using a word or a phrase that is substituted for another depending on some actual relation between the things signified .It can be a word such as "*bottle*" for drinking alcohol or an idiomatic expression as "*it rains cats and dogs*" for "heavy rain" (Jdetawy, 2019). 'General-for-

Specific' is referred to as '**metonymy**' in Warren's Model (1992).

12) **Part–for–Whole**: using a part of something to refer to the whole of it and traditionally, this kind of euphemism has been referred to as "synecdoche" (Allan & Burridge, 1991, p. 18). They also mentioned the example: "*spend a penny*" for "go to the bathroom"; from the days when public bathrooms cost a penny to access.

13) **Hyperbole**: is a way of presenting a tabooed issue in an exaggerated language to make an emotional effect (Linfoot-Ham, 2005). For example, "*flight to glory*" for "died" (Rawson, 1981, p. 11 and Allan & Burridge, 1991, p. 18). 'Hyperbole' is referred to as '**Overstatements**' in Warren's Model (1992).

14) **Understatement**: is a way of presenting tabooed terms in a less significant way as they really are; for example, "*sleep*" for "die," and "*deed*" for "act of murder," (Allan & Burridge, 1991)

15) **Borrowing**: euphemism could be formed through borrowing through which certain words and expressions are borrowed from other languages, usually French or Latin. Example: use of "*defecate*" word which is a loan from Latin to

replace "shit". 'Borrowing' is referred to as '**Loanwords**' in Warren's Model (1992).

16) **Jargon**: the use of technical terminology in referring to a tabooed issue. For example, "*feces*" instead of "shit" (Allan & Burridge, 1991, p. 20).

17) **Colloquial or Common Terms**: the use of colloquial terms rather than formal terms like using "*period*" for "menstruate" (Allan & Burridge,1991, p. 20).

Dysphemism is as common as euphemism in everyday usage. It is roughly the opposite of euphemism that means the usage of an intentionally harsh word or expression instead of polite one. Dysphemism is defined as "an expression with connotations that are offensive for either the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason" (Allan & Burridge, 1991:26). Dysphemisms, then, are used in talking about one's opponents, things one wishes to show disapproval of, and things one wishes to be seen to downgrade. Allan and Burridge state that "euphemism and dysphemism are principally determined by the choice of expression within a given context" (p. 4). It can be concluded that euphemism is not the only linguistic means of avoiding taboos, but taboos can be also addressed by another linguistic device, i.e., dysphemism.

Euphemism and dysphemism are described as "obverse sides of the same coin" (Allan & Burridge, 1991:7). Thus, euphemism and dysphemism are examples of linguistic control and refinement since they are specifically directed to employing certain words for socially unspeakable topics. Allan and Burridge (1991) introduced disease as a cross-culturally and diachronically taboo requiring an extensive use of euphemism to soften its potentially undesirable effects, or dysphemism to attack the taboo topic or the addresses. They also emphasized that people use different language when expressing emotional and social aspects of disease (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Thus, the choice of language is powerful in circumventing the taboo surrounding embarrassing issues, e.g., COVID-19 disease. Currently, people all over the world are scared and worried about their health and their loved ones that are vulnerable to this unknown virus since some countries are experiencing a second wave of COVID19 infections. Therefore, they may resort to euphemism or dysphemism to avoid directly mentioning the anxious thought of COVID-19, i.e., dying.

Language users usually resort to euphemism and dysphemism to conceptualize unspeakable topics by reducing the reality of forbidden issues. From a cognitive viewpoint, euphemistic or dysphemistic expressions are used to name things without changing or distorting their mental picture in

the speaker's mind (Olimat, 2020a). Lakoff and Johnson (2008) declare that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. In their book 'Metaphor We Live By', they proposed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory which suggests that metaphor is a cognitive process in which an experimental domain is partially mapped onto a different domain which is perceived based on the first one. In other words, which means 'coupling or mapping the concrete concept onto the abstract one.' The domain that is mapped is called "the source domain", while the domain that is mapped onto is called "the target domain".

Metaphors are not just a decorative component in literature and poetry but a fundamental part of our brain conceptual system that is central to the way we perceive ourselves, others, and the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). They are used for either highlighting or concealing. That is, metaphor allows interlocutors to recognize a specific feature of a certain concept in terms of another concept, but this could cover other features of the concept. Based on this cognitive view, the source domain, i.e., euphemism or dysphemism is mapped systematically to the target domain, i.e., taboo. Thus, speakers resort to euphemism to highlight positive, convenient, or agreeable aspects but also to hide negative, distasteful, or embarrassing aspects of the target

domain. On the other hand, speakers resort to dysphemism to attack or reduce painful or offensive features of the target domain. For instance, "to die is to sleep" involves mapping our perception of sleep onto our perception of death and fulfils a euphemistic role where the source domain mitigates the target domain. To illustrate this point, it can be said that in the euphemistic mechanism, the euphemistic expression (source domain) replaces (mapped onto) the taboo expression (target domain), and, in the process, the positive aspects of the target domain are highlighted while the negative aspects are hidden.

Metaphor by Lakoff & Johnson (1980; 2003) is divided into three types, namely structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. Structural conceptual metaphor is realized through the transfer of one concept to another. In this kind of conceptual metaphor, complicated and abstract experiences are conceptualized based on the experience of simple and specific experiences. The second type of conceptual metaphor is orientational conceptual metaphor. It is a system of ideas that is organized in the relation and interaction in space like up–down, inside out, front–behind, shallow–deep, center periphery etc. The third type is the ontological conceptual metaphors. In this type of metaphor, people borrow meaning from the physical world and relate to an abstract concept.

5. Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most common euphemistic strategies used in English and Arabic media coverage of the first wave of COVID-19?

2. What are the most common dysphemistic strategies used in English and Arabic media coverage of the first wave of COVID-19?

3. Does mass media resort to using dysphemism rather than euphemism during critical crises such as the outbreak of COVID-19?

6. Methodology

6.1. Data Collection

In order to analyze the use of euphemism and dysphemism in mass media coverage of COVID-19, 40 pieces of media and journalistic data are selected from two online newspapers and two television channels in Arabic and English, amounting to a total of four different sources. From each source, ten pieces of data are chosen. The four sources are: CNN (an American Television & Online Channel), The Guardian (a British Daily Newspaper), Al Youm7 (an Egyptian Daily Newspaper) and Al Arabiya (a Saudi News Television Channel).

The data chosen are all related to the first wave of Coronavirus pandemic, which is estimated to have begun

in March 2020 and ended at the end of May 2020, according to the Office for National Statistics (2021). The reason behind choosing the first wave of Covid 19 is because it is one of the roughest times in the history of humanity, characterized by the lack of knowledge about the novel virus, the absence of a cure or a preventive vaccine, the fear of job loss, and the deterioration of economic conditions. Applying dominant theories in pragmatics can help to obtain insight and understanding about the discourse surrounding COVID-19 news. By comparing Arabic and English data of euphemism and dysphemism, we can explore which one of them is more preferred in media coverage when it comes to critical situations.

7. Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from different media outlets during their coverage of Covid 19 pandemic were analyzed from different linguistic dimensions in the light of Allan and Burridge's theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism (1991), Warren's model of euphemism (1992), and Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980).

Firstly, the Arabic data collected from Youm 7 and Al Arabiya were interpreted and explained to investigate the frequent euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies. Secondly, the English data collected from The Guardian

and CNN are analyzed depending on the theoretical framework to investigate the frequent euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies. Thirdly, a Comparison between euphemistic strategies used in both Arabic and English media outlets was held to decided what are the most frequently used euphemistic strategies. Fourthly, Comparison between dysphemistic strategies used in Arabic and English media outlets was held to decide what are the most frequently used dysphemistic strategies. Finally, the previous two phases were compared to determine which euphemisms and dysphemisms are commonly used in critical situations.

8. Findings and Discussion

The data analysis shows that Arabic mass media tends to use euphemism rather than dysphemism in talking about the COVID-19 global pandemic. Through the data of the study, it has become apparent that the most common euphemistic strategies used in Arabic media coverage of the first wave of COVID-19 are "jargon", "understatement", and "metaphor". The most common strategy is "jargon", particularly medical terminology since the fundamental fighters of the battel against Coronavirus are the medical staffs. Jargon, by definition, conveys information in the most precise and efficient way possible. And, in circumstances where precision and timing are paramount, such as during a

crisis, communicating in the most accurate way can mitigate costly miscommunications.

Example 1: " ضد بطولات يسطرون ومرضون أطباء ...*"جيش مصر الأبيض*
. "كورونا

(Youm7, March 18, 2020)

      The expression "جيش مصر الأبيض" is used during the time of Corona virus pandemic to refer to doctors and nurses or whomever related to the health care system as they are representing the soldiers in this battle by using masks and gloves as their weapon " ليس بيدهم سلاح سوى قناع و قفازات طبية" presenting a conceptual metaphor image for what is going on in the period of COVID-19. Moreover, it is worth noting that the use of the term "soldiers" to describe healthcare workers is a relatively new phenomenon. A soldier is typically used to refer to a patient who is fighting against a hidden enemy, however the situation is seen from a different perspective during COVID 19. In the context of cancer, for instance, the metaphor was that of an individual war. In the context of COVID-19, the prevalent talk was that of a collective war that the entire humanity has to fight. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, media have repeatedly praised healthcare workers for their 'heroic' work. Media

outlets tends to use 'hyperbole' to overstate the role of the health worker in the fight against the virus by using expressions such as ''الأبطال الإستثنائين''، ''جهود إستثنائية''، and ''يسطرون بطولات ضد كورونا''.

On the other side, English mass media tends to use less euphemistic strategies, compared to Arabic media. The most common euphemistic strategies used in English media coverage of the first wave of COVID-19 are "understatement", "metaphor", and "metonym". Other significant euphemistic strategies used in Arabic and English media discourse during the first wave of the pandemic are "personification", "hyperbole" and "compounding".

Example 2:

"China celebrates what it claims is ***victory over the disease***".

(The Guardian, Apr 10, 2020)

The word 'victory' is repeatedly used during the time of COVID-19 to emphasize the understanding that the pandemic situation is a very precarious and dangerous situation, but we can overcome it. Warren (1992) claimed that metaphor is a popular semantic approach for dealing with offensive topics. According to Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Theory (1980), metaphoric

expressions function for either highlighting or concealing. In this pandemic, the war rhetoric has spread as fast as the coronavirus itself ⟨Caso, 2020⟩. War is a powerful metaphor that represents an effective, immediate, and emotive tool to communicate urgency to the general public. It also conveys a sense of struggle and righteousness that can justify exceptional measures. This metaphorical mapping transfers different attributes from the source domain of war like victory and freedom to the target domain of Coronavirus. Thus, the target domain whose existence is difficult to sense becomes clearer.

Nevertheless, research findings illustrate that dysphemistic strategies are used more frequently in English media discourse than in Arabic media. Through the data of the study, it is clear that the most frequent strategies used in English media discourse are "metaphor", "personification" and "hyperbole", respectively. In Arabic media discourse, "personification", "Jargon" and "metaphor" are the most common dysphemistic strategy used in media coverage of the pandemic.

Evidently, metaphor has proved its effectiveness in communications during critical time of COVID–19. The findings of the study show that metaphor is one of the most constantly repeated euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies in Arabic and English media discourse in the

coverage of the pandemic. "A PANDEMIC IS A WAR" is one of the central conceptual metaphors used in media coverage of the virus to help us conceptualize the experiences we have encountered in the intangible, with tangible expressions. In media discourse, the pandemic is compared to a war, the virus to an enemy, unvaccinated people to victims, doctors to soldiers, and medical equipment to weapons. Media practitioners are usually aware of the importance of language in delivering their messages. Therefore, they rely on metaphors as a rhetorical strategy to convey their ideas and ideologies.

Example 3:

"Thousands are ***fighting*** for their lives in hospitals."

(CNN, June 29, 2020)

The Conceptual metaphor (THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR) is conveyed by using phrases such as "Coronavirus battle" and "fight COVID" to refer to Coronavirus as an enemy who is fighting against humanity. In this battle, the brave medical staff "Coronavirus warriors" are fighting against COVID by using medical instruments as weapons. Through this conceptual mapping, we can understand one reality which is (Coronavirus) in terms of embodied reality

which is the (enemy). Therefore, the invisible virus became conceivably visible to us. Indeed, there is no actual battle, but it is a doctor–virus battle. Both are different entities, but, at the same time, both are metaphorically structured, as they both follow a specific
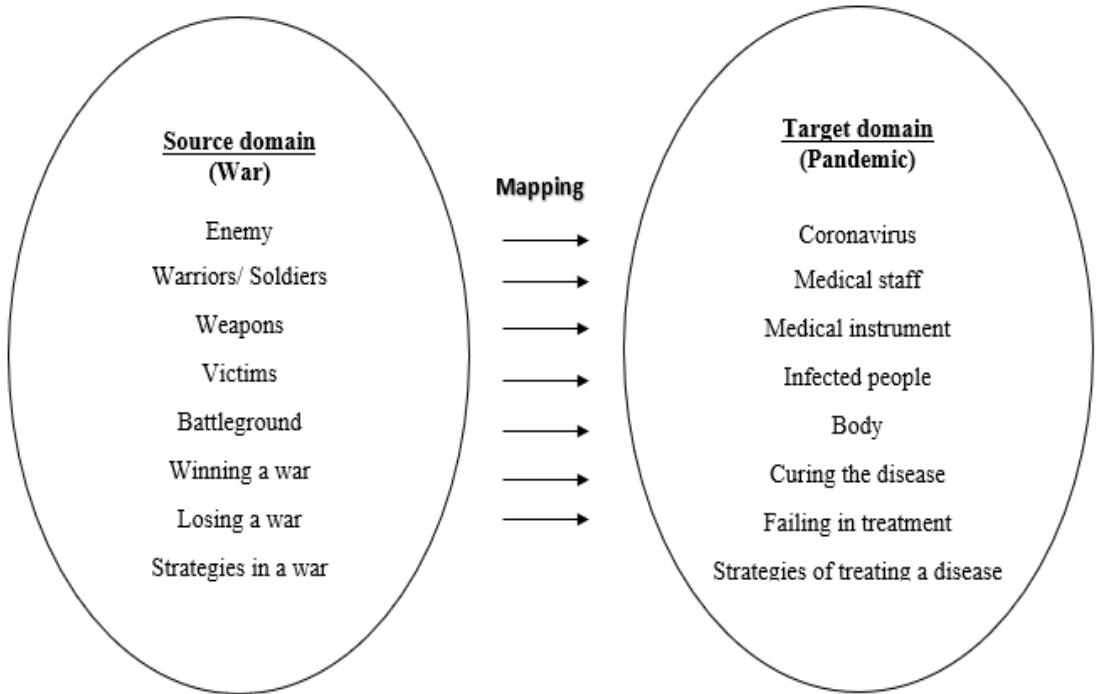

Figure 3: Conceptual Mapping of pandemic is a war.

system. The following figure is showing the conceptual mapping of the "Pandemic is a War".

Example 4:

‎"‎كورونا *يواصل تفوقه* فى معركته مع البشر. *العدو الخفى يشتت جهود ويزيد من* العلماء‎.
‎Youm7, Apr 15, 2020‎). "*حيرتهم* بعد اكتشاف *تسلله* إلى أفئدة المنكوبين به

The expression " العدو الخفي" the invisible enemy was frequently used in mass media to humanize the Corona virus. Other expressions such as "يزيد من حيرتهم" , "يشتت جهود العلماء" , "يواصل تفوقه" and "يتسلل إلى أفئدة المنكوبين" are attributing human characteristics such as *distracting*, *excelling*, and *dodging* to nonhuman thing. Psychologically, the reason behind doing so is because the world is complex and unpredictable, and often threatens us with unexpected calamities such as earthquakes, floods, and plagues. In order to predict and control these dangers, we need to understand their causes. Thus, we resort to the most familiar explanations, those based on our own experiences and those of other people (Porubanova & Guthrie, 2020).

In addition to that, the present study reveals that the use of dysphemism in mass media during the first wave of Covid–19 is much more common than the use euphemism. The results indicate that media discourse heavily relies on dysphemism when covering news regarding the global pandemic of Coronavirus where its frequency of occurrence percentage is 61% compared to 39% for euphemism. Consequently, we can conclude that mass media usually resorts to using dysphemism rather than euphemism in covering the critical crises and serious events such as Coronavirus pandemic.

9. Conclusion

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are commonly used in media discourse, especially when it comes to natural disasters and health crises. Studying and analyzing the euphemistic and dysphemistic strategies used in the Arabic and English data during the first wave of the pandemic, the researcher found some concluding remarks in both languages related to the topic. The findings of the study indicated that COVID-19 media coverage was marked by widespread use of euphemism and dysphemism during the critical health crisis of Coronavirus. It proves that the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms is not confined to poetry and literature, but also plays a significant role in facilitating social interaction. As a linguistic style, euphemism played a major role in easing and understating the shock of the crisis during the first wave in both Arabic and English media discourse. On the other hand, dysphemism helped people to conceptualize this invisible reality into a visible one.

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